

10 August 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief Receptionist

Please provide the following representatives with NFIB badges. Their respective agencies have certified their clearances to us.

SUBJECT: Ethiopia-Somalia TIME: 0930  
CHAIRER BY:  NIO/AF ROOM NO: 6F25

Army: Maj. Dale Ackels  
Nancy McCabe

State: Nepier Smith  
Edith Scott  
Edward W. Schaefer

Navy: Alex Button



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Date 10 AUG 1977

Security Approval has been granted  
the use contemplated by this request

Chief, Clearance Division

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Please refer questions regarding this meeting to Karen,

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VTE

10 Aug 77

MEETING ATTENDANCE

SUBJECT: Interagency Assessment of the Ethiopian-Somali Situation

Please give name, agency/office, and phone number below:

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[Redacted]

Nancy McCabe Army/ACSI

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[Redacted]

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John M. Smith STATE/INR/PAE  
NEPIER V. SMITH STATE/INR/PMT  
EDWARD W. SCHAEFER STATE/INR/PA  
ALEX BUTTON NAVY

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LDX TO: NSA  
State  
Treasury  
NMCC

from NIO/AF

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NSA:

State: Ms. Edith Scott  
INR/DDR/RAF  
Rm 4536  
State Dept.

Treasury: Mr. Kenedon Steins  
OS/OIS  
Rm 4328  
Main Treasury

NMCC: Ms. Nancy McCabe  
DAMI  
Rm 2D485  
Pentagon

Maj. Brian Tilbury  
AFIN  
Rm 4B879  
Pentagon

Mr. Alex Button  
NOP  
Room 5B683  
Pentagon

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[redacted] First draft -- Interagency Assessment of the Ethiopian-Somali  
Situation

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A - DDO/AF -1-2  
B - OSR/[redacted] 3  
C - [redacted] AF -4-5  
D - OER/[redacted] -6  
E - CPS -7  
F - [redacted]

LDX:

[redacted]

Nancy McCabe  
Brian Tilbury  
Alex Button

[redacted]

Edith Scott  
Ken Steins

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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505 [redacted]

National Intelligence Officers

8 August 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR: Representatives of the National Foreign Intelligence Board  
SUBJECT : Interagency Assessment of the Ethiopian-Somali Situation

1. The State Department has asked that the community provide an inter-agency assessment of the situation in the Horn regarding Ethiopia and Somalia, and Tom Thorne of INR has provided a list of questions that he believes the Department hopes such an assessment could address. A copy of this list is attached.

2. In an effort (possibly misguided) to speed the process, I have produced the attached straw-man draft of such an assessment, relying on my understanding of materials produced by DIA and CIA. In a number of cases, however, the judgments in this draft go beyond anything I recall seeing from the agencies, and you should not assume that there is great substantive authority behind them.

3. I should like to meet with you on this draft on Wednesday, 10 August, at 0930 hours in Room 6F25 of CIA Headquarters. Please come armed with alternative text (with copy to be handed round in case of extensive proposals) as well as materials for significant additions. Thank you in advance for your patience and help; please call names in to [redacted], by close of business 9 August so that we may expedite your entry to the Langley building.

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[redacted]  
National Intelligence Officer  
for Africa

Attachments

Special Distribution

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Suggested Questions for Ethiopian-Somali  
Interagency Paper

Military Situation

1. Characterize the overall military situation and relative positions of the Somalis and Ethiopians in the Ogaden.
2. At what point will the Somalis stop advancing? Can we make a clear judgment about the logistic constraints on them? How strained are they?
3. Can the Somalis hold their gains? How stretched will they be if they have to defend the Ogaden over an extended period of time? Do we have any idea of how the Somalis define the "essential Ogaden" -- the area they would try to hold at all costs?
4. What are Ethiopian capabilities to mount a counterattack? Should we be thinking of this in terms of the very near future or a more distant time? How serious have the Ethiopian defeats been in terms of morale and impaired military capacity in general?
5. Given the military situation, do we think there is any prospect for negotiation? If so, what would the parties be negotiating about?
6. Politically, what is Siad likely to do now? Create an Ogaden Republic that would ask for Somali protection and, eventually, annexation? Or simply annex right away? Or remain in de facto occupation and not worry about the legalities for the time being?

Soviet Position

1. Can we briefly characterize the Soviet position in and intentions toward Ethiopia and Somalia at this point? How hard is Moscow pressing either side? And to what end?
2. What do we think the Soviets' expectations are at this point? Are they thinking in terms of having to sacrifice one of their clients (and if so, which one)? Or are they confident of their ability to work both sides of the street? Soviet perceptions aside, how do we assess the objective situation?
3. In more concrete terms, do the Soviets have any role as mediator?
4. What is Soviet arms supply policy in the present situation and how will it be affected, if at all?
5. How do Mengistu and Siad see their relationship with the Soviets?
6. What is our best judgment of the Soviet position in Ethiopia and Somalia over, say, the next year?

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6 August 1977

## Interagency Assessment of the Ethiopian-Somali Situation

I. Current Situation on the Ground

1. The Somalis have succeeded beyond our, and very likely their own, expectations in forcing the Ethiopian military forces and civil authorities to withdraw from virtually all the military and administrative centers in the lowland Ogaden area, except for Jijiga. The Somali strategy has evolved in three phases: the initial step-up in guerrilla activity, highlighted by the cutting of the Addis Ababa-Djibouti railway at the beginning of June; the introduction of regular Somali forces, including armor and aircraft, beginning about 23 July, to overcome the major concentrations of Ethiopian forces in the lowland area; an assault, which appears to be starting now, to invest and if possible seize the major Ethiopian centers in the north -- Jijiga first, and, farther into the hills, Diredawa and Harar. The Somalis now say they hope to accomplish this by 1 September, although their original timetable reportedly did not call for completion of this phase until October.

2. The Somalis have also built up their guerrilla forces, with assistance from some regulars, in the southwestern Ogaden region (this movement produced the clashes between Somali and Kenyan forces in ), but it appears that these elements have held up their main attack until results are in from the higher priority operations farther north. They will in all likelihood go into action during the next few weeks.

3. We believe that the Somalis intend to continue fighting until they are satisfied that the Ethiopians are no longer able to mount a serious counteroffensive against Somalia in the north. The capture of Jijiga and the neutralization (better yet, of course, capture) of Diredawa and Harar would satisfy this condition as far

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as territorial successes are concerned, since without these bases the Ethiopians would find it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to launch a ground counter-offensive against the Somalis. The loss or neutralization of the airfields associated with these centers would also make unlikely a successful airstrike against Somalia by Ethiopia unless the Ethiopians acquire more modern longer range aircraft than they now have.

4. The operations against Jijiga, and particularly against Diredawa and Harar, will not be as easy, however, as those against more outlying garrisons have been. Jijiga is down in the plain, where Somali armor can operate, with relatively good access to logistical support, but it is also closer to Ethiopia's supply line. Harar and Diredawa, on the other hand, lie in the hills, in broken terrain that provides good cover for guerrilla sabotage and interdiction operations but is poor tank country. Harar and Diredawa are also much larger population centers than any elsewhere in the Ogaden.

5. We do not have precise evidence, but we believe that the operations so far have put a substantial strain on Somali's logistics, and we strongly suspect that the present urgent Somali quest for additional supplies of weapons and ammunition has behind it a concern that the reduction of the three remaining Ethiopian centers will require using up most of Somalia's reserve stocks, leaving its forces vulnerable to an Ethiopian counterattack should one develop in the fall.

6. From what we have seen of the Ethiopian performance, we believe that the Somali concern is exaggerated. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] it seems clear that the Ethiopians are not capable at this time of mounting a counteroffensive, and we doubt that they will be so for months, possibly even a year to come, even if they keep Diredawa and Harar. The Ethiopian Third Division, the unit defending the Ogaden, is no longer an effective force for offensive purposes, and the only other source of trained



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combat-ready troops is the Second Division, now deployed in Eritrea, and heavily engaged there.

## II. Somali and Ethiopian Objectives and Capabilities

7. The general Somali objective is to establish in the Ogaden a Somali-dominated administration that will, at an appropriate time, "request" that it become part of a larger Somali nation. We would expect this evolution to take place before the end of this year, unless the military situation is reversed in a way we do not foresee. We do not believe that the Somalis will wish to announce any particular geographical line as the border of the new entity; they will certainly prefer to keep their options open for the negotiations to which they hope ultimately to bring the Ethiopians. In practice, however, we would expect the Somalis to establish outposts only a fairly short distance up into the highland areas, because their ethnic support thins out as the altitude rises.

8. We believe that the Somalis can defend such an area, stretching from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_, for an indefinite period. Ultimately, however, as the Ethiopian internal situation stabilizes and assuming the development of more effective and better organized government in Addis Ababa, with the organization of effective military forces as its central ingredient, the Somalis' situation will become more precarious in the territory they have liberated. In the absence of a settlement -- and very possibly even with one that the Ethiopians would view as made under duress -- the Ethiopians would begin to press the issue of terra irredenta and the claims of their ethnic tribesmen to water holes, pasture, rights-of-way, recovery of stolen cattle, etc., etc. Moreover, factional divisions among the Somali peoples will offer the Ethiopians opportunities for subversive action in this territory. The situation would thus be reversed, with a vengeful Ethiopia making claims against the Somalis.

9. But we are speaking here of a matter of years -- one or more -- rather than

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weeks or months. The events we are witnessing have been made possible by the revolution in Ethiopia and the disarray that has accompanied it; time is required both for the recovery of military morale, especially in the sense of a recovery of confidence by field commanders that they will be supported from Addis Ababa, in effective and timely fashion, and for the organization, equipment, and political indoctrination needed to produce a reliable military machine. The expedient of the levee en masse that Mengistu has turned to, following other revolutionary models, has not produced results beyond the initial success against the somewhat rag-tag EDU elements in the northwest, and it is not likely to be of much use against as relatively well organized a force as that which the Somalis have fielded.

10. The Ethiopian objective, then, is to buy time, holding as well and as much as possible but fundamentally looking to a future when the country's superior resources and manpower reserves can be brought to bear through better organization and control. Diplomatic, technical, and material assistance are required to support this objective, and the recent Ethiopian approaches to the US are indicative of a sense that all possibilities must be canvassed.

11. While in a sense this situation and outlook should call for some kind of negotiation, we doubt that this will be the course that Ethiopia will follow. For Ethiopia, negotiation under present circumstances means admitting defeat or at least the legitimacy of Somali claims. For Somalia, there is no point to negotiation that involves compromise: the Somalis are in possession of the territory and are enforcing long-held claims; it only remains for the Ethiopians to recognize these claims.

12. Our judgment of these attitudes depends, of course, on the evolution of the military situation along the general lines we have sketched. Were the Somalis to suffer a serious reverse before they had had a chance to secure reserve supplies, they would be more amenable to a cease-fire and possibly serious negotiation. But in those circumstances, one would lose the Ethiopians because their hopes would have

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13. There is a very outside chance that the ideological conversions going on in Ethiopia might bring a different attitude by Mengistu or another Ethiopian leader to the relationship between highlanders and the Muslim lowlanders of the Ethiopian borderlands. In this case, negotiations might be possible. But so far, what evidence we see indicates that Mengistu and his colleagues share the traditional Ethiopian view that their state must be a unitary one, and that concessions to the border peoples will endanger the central fabric of the Ethiopian nation. Indeed, Mengistu's socialist outlook in this respect may well reinforce traditional Ethiopian xenophobia and make him more insistent that the country be kept indivisible and with its present borders.

### III. The Soviet Factor

14. Current Soviet policy regarding Ethiopia and Somalia appears to rely primarily on three elements: the need of both parties for Soviet military supply and resupply; the agility of Soviet diplomacy in arousing suspicion of the reliability of the West, especially of the US, and in allaying suspicion that the Soviets are following other than a "principled" course in their relations with both parties; and on the possibility that the socialist tilt of the present leadership in both countries will significantly moderate their mutual historical antipathies.

15. From what we see so far, Moscow still believes that these elements in combination with other pressures and inducements that can be developed from Eastern Europe and Cuba will enable Soviet policy to avoid having to choose in a definitive way between supporting one country over the other. The Soviets fundamentally favor the kind of vision that Castro conjured up before the Somali and Ethiopian leaders last spring: a socialist confederation that could be the central power in northeast Africa and could project its influence into southwestern Arabia and out to sea into the Indian Ocean. This vision is an ultimate prospect; the response by Siad to Castro's approach made clear that it is not an immediate possibility.

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16. In the immediate circumstances, the Soviets are urging, indeed pressing, if the Somalis are to be believed, for a Somali withdrawal and negotiations, presumably with the Soviets or other Bloc countries as brokers. Since both Somalis and Ethiopia at this stage reject this course, the Soviets have a better chance than they otherwise would of appearing even-handed in the application of diplomatic or other pressure. If, as we think likely, the Soviets do not succeed in bringing the parties to the table, we believe that they will continue to deliver on military supplies they have agreed to send to Somalia, but will stand back from new engagements, while maintaining though not necessarily increasing rapidly unless Mengistu's situation becomes more desperate, their supply-line through Eastern Europe to Ethiopia. If they follow the pattern of advice they have given in other circumstances, they will urge Mengistu to build for the long haul, to avoid military adventures that could be disastrous, while they themselves continue to work to bring both Mengistu and Siad to "reason."

17. The risk in this policy, of course, is that of underestimating the strength and depth of ethnic/nationalist feeling in both countries. There is already evidence that Soviet efforts to bring about negotiation have aroused resentment and suspicion in both Mogadiscio and Addis Ababa (and even among the Eritrean dissident groups, who similarly resist the idea of negotiations when they feel they are on the eve of victory). More fundamentally, Somalia's and Ethiopia's respective associations with the Soviets are not bringing the benefits that each government feels it had a right to expect from the relationship. The Somalis thought they were buying Soviet support against a US-allied Ethiopia; they did not envision a Soviet-allied Ethiopia, and this development undercuts the basic rationale for their ties with Moscow. Similarly the Ethiopians had every reason to expect that their relations with the Soviets would have the effect of restraining, not exciting, Somalia's activities against the Ogaden but the opposite has so far happened.

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18. Our best estimate is that over the next year both Ethiopia and Somalia will modify their relations with the Soviets in recognition of these disappointments, and in this situation the US, other Western countries, and in the case of the Somalis some of the Arab states, will find opportunities to play larger roles than they now do. But we do not believe, on the basis of the evidence so far and the other developments we can foresee, that either Ethiopia or Somalia will be led to "break" with the Soviets and even less so with other governments in the Soviet community.

19. In particular, we still doubt any early move by the Somalis to oust the Soviets from the facilities at Berbera although we would expect some gradual constriction on the freedom with which the Soviets make use of these facilities. Siad is, we think, too good a poker player and his skepticism of Western (read US) attitudes too strong to throw away this card very soon. To oust the Soviets from Berbera would likely end the relationship with them; he feels he needs the relationship to keep the West interested.

20. On the Ethiopian side, we would expect greater interest in US, and other Western, economic and technical assistance, as a balance to the Soviet/East European/Cuban presence, but barring a real change of regime the Ethiopians will continue to look primarily to the East for help and models in reorganizing and revitalizing their military and political institutions. Disillusion with the Russians is more likely to make them look elsewhere in the socialist camp than to the West, at this stage.

#### IV. Addendum re Kenya

21. We believe that particular attention should be paid at this point to the potential effects of developments in the Ethiopian-Somali dispute on the situation of Kenya. The Kenyan government under Kenyatta has acquired the reputation of being basically under a Western -- and particularly in recent years US -- umbrella. While one price the Somalis pay for their success in the Ogaden is almost certainly eternal

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vigilance against Ethiopia, there is also a danger that this success will inspire the Somalis to pursue their irredentist claims against northeastern Kenya, where there is another borderline arbitrarily drawn by the "imperialists" during a period when the Somali nation could not defend itself.

22. The Kenyan government does not have the resources or the forces to defend successfully should the Somalis move, even with purely guerrilla elements, to enforce these claims. While Kenya's material interest in this territory is marginal at present, its loss or the Kenyan government's manifest inability to defend its border would reflect unfavorably on the kind of relatively open society, friendly to Westerners and unfriendly to the socialists, that has grown up here, and could prove a complicating factor in the maneuvering for succession that is certain to follow Kenyatta's death. In other words, one side effect of Somali moves against Kenya could be the emergence in Nairobi of a government with a less forthcoming attitude toward the US than now prevails, with some accompanying "trauma" for the US position in East Africa.